

Questar to Spend \$1B to Reduce Operations Impact in Pinedale Anticline

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Questar Exploration and Production (E&P) plans to spend more than \$1 billion to limit the impact of its operations in the Wyoming Pinedale Anticline area on habitat and wildlife, a company official told the House Natural Resources Committee Tuesday.

"I hope you'll find our Pinedale Anticline project, where **Questar** is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in mitigation, as a constructive example of one innovative approach to this whole issue," said Charles E. Greenhawt, manager of government affairs for **Questar** E&P, during a House committee hearing exploring the conflict between fishing, hunting and energy development on federal lands.

The small area near Pinedale, WY, is now the country's second largest natural gas field, where Questar is producing unconventional and tight sands gas with the help of the latest fracturing technology, he noted.

Greenhawt said the producer developed a stricter, costlier plan -- more than \$200 million over what the federal government required -- to reduce its environmental imprint in the Pinedale Anticline. The plan calls for drilling multiple wells from individual pads using directional technology.

Future operations on the Anticline will be even more environmentally friendly, he noted. Drilling operations will be concentrated, leaving more room for wildlife. The decreased footprint from pad well drilling will leave about 92% of the Anticline undisturbed, and expanded pipeline facilities will enable the company to avoid 165,000 truck trips each year in the area, Greenhawt said.

The total tab to carry out these environmental mitigation measures will be more than \$1 billion, "but it will allow enough production of natural gas to heat 10 million homes for 30 years," he said.

But Rollin D. Sparrow, board member of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, warned that energy development was occurring on western public lands without much regard for the environment. "Energy development is not being done right" on public lands in the West, and the mistakes are being made over and over again, he said.

Sparrow estimated that up to 50,000 new wells will be drilled in Wyoming alone over the next decade. Leasing is being offered in "very sensitive" wildlife areas, without "proper evaluations" of the impact on habitat and wildlife, he said.

"We see this as an immediate threat during the next couple of years that needs to be stopped now," he told the House committee. Sparrow said the number of oil and gas leases being offered has increased significantly since the last national election. "It looks pretty clear to me that people want to get as much leased under the current administration before it's too late."

Stephen P. Mealey of the Boone and Crockett Club was less critical. "The stage is set to find a sustainable balance point for energy development and wildlife," he said, adding that "I am confident that point will be found."

He recommended that Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman form a study group to help energy companies explore ways to minimize their environmental footprint.

The heads of two unions called for federal and state governments to strike a balance between energy development and the environment. Rep. Don Young of Alaska, the ranking Republican on the House panel, warned the union presidents that their jobs and their union members' jobs would be threatened "if this is a stalking horse to stop development of energy."

Without energy development, "I hope you understand what that means for your jobs because your people will not work," Young said.